

it, but he said, "The problem in this country is that everything that ought to be up is down, and everything that ought to be down is up." Do you remember when he said that? America was laughing with him and rocking with him. But I'll tell you something, he's got to change his speech this time, because everything that ought to be down is down, and the things that ought to be up are up.

And I just want to tell you that for all of you who have given us a chance to serve, you should feel that you were a part of putting in place a strategy that has cut the deficit by 60 percent, that has given us record exports, that has continued to invest in education, in technology, and the future, that has brought this deficit down, and that will balance the budget without destroying our commitments to our senior citizens, to our children, to families with disabilities through Medicare and Medicaid and without requiring cuts in education and protecting the environment. We are going to go into a future with a strong economy, where there are more good jobs and where we're growing together in the 21st century because of the policies that you have supported.

And I just want to ask you in the weeks and months ahead to go out and be a good citizen, talk to your friends and neighbors and ask them, what do you want America to look like when we reach the 21st century—it's just 4 years away—what do you want America to look like when your children are your age? It's not that far away. We've got to build an America where every single solitary person, every boy and girl, without regard to their race, their income, their station in life, has a chance to live out their dreams. We've got to build an America strong enough to protect ourselves and to lead the world for peace and freedom. And as we saw at those churches today—one white, one black, both burned and brought together—we have got to build an America where we're coming together, not being driven apart the way so many other countries are. That's the way to go into the future, and that's what we're going to do.

Thank you, God bless you, and thank you for a happy birthday. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 6:12 p.m. at McKellar-Sipes Airport. In his remarks, he referred to Bill Purcell, majority leader, and Lois DeBerry, speaker pro tempore, of the Tennessee House of Representatives.

Remarks on Signing the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996

August 20, 1996

Thank you very much. Cathy, it may be your birthday, but I would say that everybody here feels that you have given us a great gift today by reminding us about what this is all about. And we wish you and your fine children well. And I don't think being in the band will hurt them a bit. I'm glad you're going to do that. [*Laughter*]

I want to thank the members of our administration who are here: Secretary Reich, Small Business Administrator Phil Lader, and others. I want to thank all the Members of Congress who are here, especially Senator Kennedy who, himself, probably broke the wage and hour laws by working so hard to pass this bill. If we'd been paying him by the hour, we'd be underpaying him in the last year. Thank you very much.

There are a lot of people who worked hard on this bill who aren't here: Senator Daschle, Congressman Gephardt, Congressman Bonior, Congressman Clay, in particular did. I want to join with others and thank the countless labor unions who have championed this bill, led by the truly tireless John Sweeney.

I'd like to remind the American people of something, because sometimes our unions are criticized for looking out for their members too much. There are very few unions in America that have minimum wage workers. Most of these unions did this because they thought it was the right thing to do. They spent their time and their money and their energy trying to help other people who do not belong to their organizations, and I thank you for that.

I'd like to thank the religious groups, the economists, the business people who have made this their cause of concern. Again, I thank the Members, including members of both parties, who supported this legislation.

I'll say more in a moment about the rest of the bill, but let me just begin by saying this is a truly remarkable piece of legislation. It is pro-work, pro-business, and pro-family; it raises the minimum wage; it helps small businesses in a number of ways that I will explain in a moment, including retirement and incentive to invest; and it promotes adoption in two very sweeping ways that have long needed to be done in the United States. This is a cause for celebration for all Americans of all parties, all walks of life, all faiths. This bill represents the very best in our country.

It will give 10 million Americans, as Cathy said, a chance to raise stronger families and build better futures. By coming together across lines that have too often divided us and finding common ground, we have made this a real season of achievement for the people of America.

At its heart, this bill does reaffirm our most profoundly American values, offering opportunity to all, demanding responsibility from all, and coming together as a community to do the right thing. This bill says to the working people of America: If you're willing to take responsibility and go to work, your work will be honored. We're going to honor your commitment to your family. We're going to recognize that \$4.25 an hour is not enough to raise a family.

It's harder and harder to raise children today and harder and harder for people to succeed at home and at work. And I have said repeatedly, over and over again to the American people: We must not force our families to make a choice. Most parents have to work. We have a national interest in seeing that our people can succeed at home where it counts the most in raising their children, and succeed at work so they'll have enough income to be able to succeed at home. We must do both, and this bill helps us achieve that goal.

These 10 million Americans will become part of America's economic success story. A success story that in the last 4 years has led us to 900,000 new construction jobs; a record number of new businesses started, including those owned by women and minorities; a deficit that is the smallest it's been since 1981, and 60 percent less than it was when I took

office; 10 million new jobs; 12 million American families who have been able to take advantage of family and medical leave; almost 4½ million new homeowners and 10 million other Americans who refinanced their homes at lower mortgage rates. And, most importantly of all, perhaps, real hourly wages, which fell for a decade, have finally begun to rise again. America is on the move.

But our challenge, my fellow Americans, is to make sure that every American can reap the rewards of a growing economy, every American has the tools to make the most of his or her own life, to build those strong families and to succeed at home and at work. As the Vice President said, the first step was taken in 1993 with the passage of the family and medical leave law and with the earned-income tax credit, which cut taxes for 15 million working families. Today, that earned-income tax credit is worth about \$1,000 to a family of four with an income under \$28,000 a year.

Well, today we complete the second half of that effort. Together with our tax cut for working families, this bill ensures that a parent working full time at the minimum wage can lift himself or herself and their children out of poverty. Nobody who works full time with kids in the home should be in poverty. If we want to really revolutionize America's welfare system and move people from welfare to work and reward work, that is the first, ultimate test we all have to meet. If you get up every day and you go to work, and you put in your time and you have kids in your home, you and your children will not be in poverty.

We have some hard working minimum wage people here today supporting Cathy. Let me tell you about them: 70 percent of them are adults, 6 of 10 are working women, and for them, work is about more than a paycheck, it's about pride. They want a wage they can raise their families on. By raising the minimum wage by 90 cents, this bill, over 2 years, will give those families an additional \$1,800 a year in income, enough to buy 7 months of groceries, several months of rent, or child care, or as Cathy said, to pay all of the bills from the utilities in the same month.

For many, this bill will make the difference between their ability to keep their families

together and their failure to do so. These people reflect America's values, and it's a lot harder for them than it is for most of us to go around living what they say they believe in. It's about time they got a reward, and today they'll get it.

I would also like to say a very special word of thanks to the business owners, especially the small-business owners who supported this bill. Many of the minimum wage employers I talk to wanted to pay their employees more than 4.25 an hour and would be happy to do so as long as they can do it without hurting their businesses, and that means their competitors have to do the same thing. This bill will allow them to compete and win, to have happier, more productive employees, and to know they're doing the right thing. For all of those small businesses, I am very, very appreciative.

I would also like to say that this bill does a remarkable number of things for small businesses. In each of the last 3 years, our Nation has set a new record in each succeeding year in the number of new businesses started. And we know that most of the new jobs in America are being created by small- and medium-sized businesses. In 1993, I proposed a \$15,000 increase in the amount of capital a small business can expense, to spark the kind of investment that they need to create jobs. Well, in 1993 we only won half that increase, but today I'll get to sign the second half into law, and I thank the Congress for passing that, as well.

As the Vice President said, this bill also includes a work-opportunity tax credit to provide jobs for the most economically disadvantaged working Americans, including people who want to move from welfare to work. Now, there will be a tightly drawn economic incentive for people to hire those folks and give them a chance to enter the work force, as well. It extends the research tax credit to help businesses stay competitive in the global economy. It extends a tax incentive for businesses to train and educate their employees. That's good news for people who need those skills, and it's good news for America because we have to have the best educated work force in the world in the 21st century.

This legislation does even more to strengthen small business by strengthening

the families that make them up. It helps millions of more Americans to save for their own retirement. It makes it much easier for small businesses to offer pension plans by creating a new small business 401(k) plan. It also lets more Americans keep their pensions when they change jobs without having to wait a year before they can start saving at their new jobs. As many as 10 million Americans without pensions today could now earn them as a result of this bill.

I'm delighted we are joined today, among others, by Shawn Marcell, the CEO of Prima Facie, a fast-growing video monitoring company in Pennsylvania, which now has just 17 employees, but that's a lot more than he started with. He stood with me in April and promised that if we kept our word and made pensions easier and cheaper for small businesses like his, he'd give pensions to all of his employees. Today, he has told us he's making good on that pledge. I'd like him to stand up, and say I predict that thousands more will follow Shawn's lead. Thank you, Shawn. Please stand up. Let's give him a hand. God bless you, sir. *[Applause]* Thank you.

I'd also like to say a special word of thanks to our SBA Administrator, Phil Lader, and to the White House Conference on Small Business. When the White House Conference on Small Business met, they said one of their top priorities was increasing the availability and the security of pensions for small-business owners in America. This is a good thing. It is also pro-work, pro-family, and pro-business.

Finally, this bill does something else that is especially important to me and to Hillary, and I'm glad she's here with us today. It breaks down the financial and bureaucratic barriers to adoption, giving more children what every child needs and deserves, loving parents and a strong, stable home.

Two weeks ago, we had a celebration for the American athletes who made us so proud in Atlanta at the centennial Olympics. Millions of Americans now know that one of them, the Decathlon Gold Medalist Dan O'Brien, speaks movingly about having been an adopted child and how much the support of his family meant in his life. Right now, there are tens of thousands of children wait-

ing for the kind of family that helped to make Dan O'Brien an Olympic champion. At the same time, there are thousands of middle class families that want to bring children into their homes but cannot afford it. We're offering a \$5,000 tax credit to help bring them together. It gives even more help to families that will adopt children with disabilities or take in two siblings, rather than seeing them split up. And lastly, this bill ends the long standing bias against interracial adoption which has too often meant an endless, needless wait for America's children.

You know, as much as we talk about strong, loving families, it's not every day that we here in Washington get to enact a law that literally creates them or helps them stay together. This is such a day. Although he can't be with us today, I also want to thank Dave Thomas, himself adopted, who went on to found Wendy's and do so much for our country. Perhaps more than any other American citizen, he has made these adoption provisions possible, and we thank him.

Lastly, I'd like to point out that we do have some significant number of adoptive families here with us today, including some who are on the stage. And so I'd just like to acknowledge the Weeks family, the Wolfington family, the Outlaw family, the Fitzwater family, and ask them and anyone else here from the adoptive family community to stand up who'd like to stand. We'd like to recognize you and thank you for being here. Thank you all for being here. Thank you.

Beside me, or in front of me now, is the desk used by Frances Perkins, Franklin Roosevelt's labor secretary and the very first woman ever to serve in the Cabinet. She was one of our greatest labor secretaries. It was from her desk that many of America's pioneering wage, hour, and workplace laws originated, including the very first 25 cent an hour minimum wage signed into law by President Roosevelt in 1938.

Secretary Perkins understood that a living wage was about more than feeding a family or shelter from a storm. A living wage makes it possible to participate in what she called the culture of community, to take part in the family, the community, the religious life we all cherish. Confident in our ability to provide for ourselves and for our children, secure in

the knowledge that hard work does pay. A minimum wage increase, portable health care, pension security, welfare to work opportunities, that's a plan that's putting America on the right track.

Now, we have to press forward, giving tax cuts for education and childrearing and child care, buying a first home, finishing that job of balancing the budget without violating our obligations to our parents and our children and the disabled and health care, to education and the environment and to our future. That's a plan that will keep America on the right track, building strong families and strong futures by working together.

For everyone here who played a role in this happy day, I thank you, America thanks you, and our country is better because of your endeavors.

God bless you. Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:25 p.m. on the South Lawn at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Catherine Wilkinson, an employee of West Virginia Northern Community College, who introduced the President, and John Sweeney, president, AFL-CIO. H.R. 3448, approved August 20, was assigned Public Law No. 104-188.

Statement on Signing the Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996 *August 20, 1996*

Today I have signed into law H.R. 3448, the "Small Business Job Protection Act of 1996."

This is important and long overdue legislation that provides a badly needed pay raise for millions of Americans and their families who struggle to make ends meet while working at the minimum wage. The Act boosts the minimum wage in two steps—a 50 cent increase from \$4.25 to \$4.75 an hour that takes effect October 1, followed by an additional 40 cent rise to \$5.15 an hour on September 1, 1997. This increase will help some 10 million of our hardest pressed working families build a better future. It is true to the basic American bargain that if you work hard you ought to have food on your table and a living wage in your pocket. It is the right thing to do.